

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN’S HEALTH SURVEY

The State of California mandates that students be taught about the AIDS virus but leaves the decision whether to teach human sexuality classes to school districts. Provision of sex education in schools has been a controversial issue at the local level, with some advocating for comprehensive sex education programs, some advocating for abstinence-only programs and others insisting that information about sexual anatomy and behavior should not be presented in public schools.

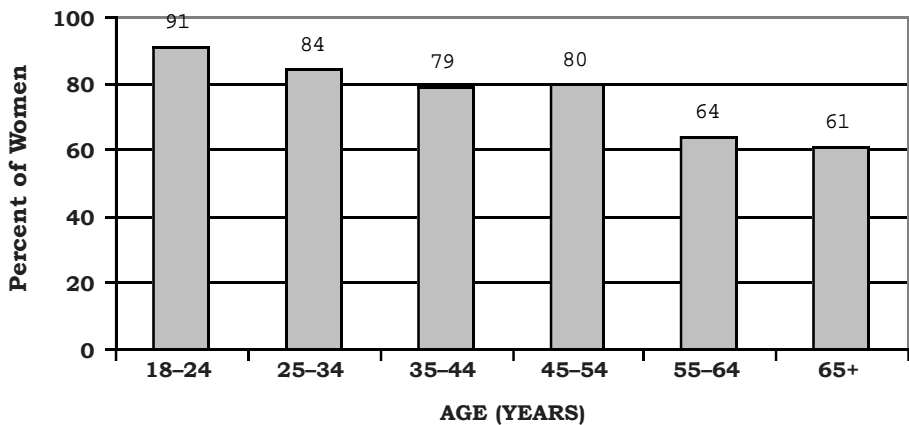
The 1997 California Women’s Health Survey assessed California women’s attitudes toward the provision of sex education. Respondents were asked to state whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following three statements: **“Schools should teach classes on human sexuality,” “schools should teach classes on contraception (birth control),” and “schools should teach classes on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).”**

- In general, women in California are very supportive of sex education in schools. Over three quarters of all women support these three types of sex education.
- Women are more supportive of sex education focused on STD prevention (92% agree or strongly agree) than sex education about human sexuality (80%) or contraception (78%).
- There are substantial differences in attitudes about sex education by age. Older women were less likely than younger women to support sex education about human sexuality and contraception. Young women (age 18–25) are most supportive of sex education in schools—over 90% of young women either agree or strongly agree with the three statements above.
- Attitudes toward sex education do not vary substantially by race/ethnicity.
- Women who have teenage children report attitudes toward sex education similar to those of women who do not.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Office of Family Planning

Percent of Women Who Agree or Strongly Agree That Schools Should Teach Classes On Contraception, By Age; California, 1997



Public Health Message:

Support for sexual education in schools is widespread across women in different race/ethnic and age groups, especially for education related to sexually transmitted disease prevention.

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